"WHEN THEY SING":
THE PERFORMANCE OF SONGS IN ENGLISH MASONIC LODGES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Andrew Pink

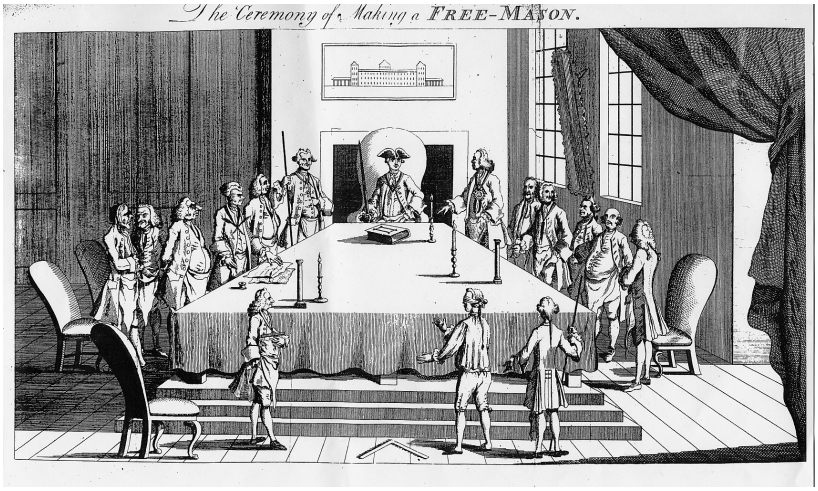

Figure 1: Mid eighteenth-century masonic lodge room.
'The Ceremony of Making a Free-Mason' in *Hiiram*, 1766.

The research libraries of the UK are brim full with eighteenth-century English masonic song texts, and occasionally English masonic songs with music too, and anyone wishing to make a study of such material needs to find a method of organising it. The lack of any such method has always been an impediment to the appreciation of the value of this material, not only by freemasons, but also by cultural historians in general.

It is well known that many masonic songs had an 'informal' use during the unstructured social time that came after the close of a masonic lodge,[1] but the 'formal' use of songs within a lodge itself is understood far less well. This is not surprising, since many aspects of eighteenth-century English masonic lodges remain unclear, and occasionally disputed, not least because the sources themselves never seem to provide exact corroboration with each other. In exploring the performance of songs in eighteenth-century English lodges, I propose a performance framework within which to place the material and a model for the material itself.

The basis of this discussion is that there were two places within a lodge in which songs had a 'formal' use; firstly at the end of a 'Lecture' (a use which I further define as a 'formalritual' use) and secondly during a lodge's meal (a use which I further define as a 'formalconvivial' use). It is upon these 'formalliturgical' and 'formalconvivial' uses of song that the present chapter is focused, reviewing, in particular, the contemporary written evidence that describes the role and the performance practice of the two 'formalritual'

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[1] See, for instance, Mark Wallace, "Music, Song, & Spirits: The Lighter side of Scottish Freemasonry" *History Scotland* 1 (2004): 38–44.

masonic songs that seem to have dominated the 'work' of the eighteenth-century English masonic lodge, i.e. *The Entered Apprentices Song* (figure 3) and *The Fellow Crafts Song* (figure 4). Many eighteenth-century writers agree that: "When-ever a lodge is held, the songs of the Fellow-Crafts and the Apprentices are sung".[2] It was only after the lodge was closed that the repertoire of 'informal' masonic songs came into its own.

> [After the Lodge business] everyone is at liberty to depart or stay longer: everything of masonry is excluded: they talk of what they please, and sing various songs for their amusement.[3]

Broadly speaking, the principal activities of an eighteenth-century English lodge were two-fold. Firstly, lodges made freemasons and led them through the hierarchy of the three degrees of freemasonry, which were, from the 1720s, Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft, and (later) Master. The lodge members met in a private room (almost always in a tavern) and sat around a table with a space at one end of the room to perform the ceremonies necessary for the making of a freemason (figures 1 and 2).[4] The table would have doubled, in many cases, as a meal table. The 'work' around the table comprised the 'Lectures', a process in which the formulaic questions and answers of the knowledge relevant to each of the degrees of freemasonry were practiced:

> by way of Catechism, or Lecture, The Master asking the Questions, and the Members, properly seated, making the Answers one after the other; this is termed Working.[5]

The following short extract from the opening of an eighteenth-century Fellow Crafts lecture gives a sense of this:

> Mas[ter]. Brother are you a Fellow Craft?
> Ans[wer]. I am. Try me. Prove me.
> Mas. Where was you made a Fellow Craft?
> Ans. In a just and lawful Lodge.
> Mas. How was you prepared to made a Fellow Craft?
> Ans. I was neither naked nor cloathed, barefoot, nor shod … [etc].[6]

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[2] [Anon] *A Master-Key to Free-Masonry; by Which All the Secrets of the Society Are Laid Open; and Their Pretended Mysteries Exposed to the Public.]...], s*econd edition (London: J. Burd, 1760), p. 10.

[3] From an edition of *Jachin and Boaz* by William Nichol, cited in A Sharpe, "Masonic Songs and Song Books of the Eighteenth Century," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* LXV (1953), p. 86.

[4] A. C. F. Jackson, "Preston's England," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 89 (1977), p. 105.

[5] Hiram (1766), p. 23.

[6] A. C. F. Jackson, *English Masonic Exposures of 1760-1769 : With Full Transcripts of Three Distinct Knocks, 1760, Jachin and Boaz, 1762, Shibboleth, 1765* (London: Lewis Masonic, 1986), p. 85.

Secondly, if not engaged in making a freemason, or rehearsing the ‘Lectures’, the lodge provided the opportunity for some edifying demonstration or perhaps a lecture (not to be confused with the ‘Lectures’ mentioned above). Such an educational demonstration or lecture was based on a theme related to one of the seven Liberal Arts, around which the intellectual life of English freemasonry clung. So, for example, at the Old Kings Arms Lodge (London), in the period 1733–34, there were scientific papers given on themes that included: The Structure and Force of Muscles; The Water Clock; and Optics.[7] At the Philo-musicae Lodge (1725–7, London) the edifying emphasis was upon the study of music.[8]

The four earliest known English masonic songs are *The Entered Apprentices Song, The Masters Song, The Wardens Song* and *The Fellow Crafts Song*, which all appear in James Anderson’s *Constitutions* (1723), the first official book of English freemasonry.[9] Each of these four songs, except the last, is printed with music. Although the style of the music that is given in the *Constitutions* implies a role for instruments (figure 5), the fact is, as far as the written evidence shows that in English lodges of the period music was generally vocal and unaccompanied by instruments.[10] The four song texts in the *Constitutions* became the foundation of all subsequent English masonic song texts, consistently re-published in English masonic books throughout the century.

According to the rubrics in Anderson’s book of 1723 *The Masters Song or A History of Masonry* is ‘To be sung when the Master shall give leave’, *The Entered Apprentices Song* is ‘To be sung when all grave business is over, and with the Master’s Leave’, *The Fellow Crafts Song* is ‘To be sung and played at the Grand Feast’ (i.e at the annual meeting of the Grand Lodge), and *The Wardens Song* is To be sung and play’d at the Quarterly

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[7] J. F. Ashby, *Freemasonry and Entertainment (the Prestonian Lecture 1999)* (London: J F Ashby, 1999), p 13. In John Lane*, Masonic Records 1717-1894* (London: Freemasons' Hall, 1895), p. 60 it states that the Old Kings Arms was in Tower Street, Seven Dials, London.

[8] Margaret C. Jacob *The Radical Enlightenment : Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*, second edition (Morristown, NJ: The Temple Books, 2003), chapter 3, pp. 91115, shows how important Newtonian science (Natural Philosophy) was, to early English freemasons, and how it had a popular audience in masonic lodges. Many members of the Royal Society were senior ranking English freemasons. For Philo-musicae Lodge see Andrew Pink ‘A Music Club for Freemasons’, *Early Music*, 38 (2010) 4: 523–36. Online resource, http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/em/caq077, accessed 1 April 2017.

[9] J. Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Freemasons* (London: William Hunter and John Senex, 1723). Lewis Mercy (fl.1708-51) assisted Anderson with the music for these songs, see Andrew Pink ‘Lewis Mercy (fl.1708-51)’ in C. Revauger and C. Porset (eds.) *Le Monde maçonnique des Lumières (Europe-Amériques) Dictionnaire prosopographique* (Editions Champion: Paris, 2013), pp. 1944–48.

[10] William Preston (1742–1818), in his *Illustrations of Masonry* (nine editions between 1772 and 1812) suggested a considerable role for both vocal and instrumental music in lodge ritual, but there is no evidence to suggest that Preston’s high view of the role music should take was adopted, attempted, or even practical, in most lodges, until the later development of permanently designated masonic rooms and halls.

Communication (i.e. the quarterly administrative meeting of the Grand Lodge). By following Anderson's rubrics *The Masters Song* and *The Entered Apprentices Song* would appear to be the only two songs of the four that are directly connected with the local lodges, being both performed upon the Master's 'leave'. And yet eighteenth-century writers repeatedly state that it was *The Entered Apprectices Song* and *The Fellow Crafts Song* that were synonymous with each other and with the (formal-ritual) 'work' of the lodge.[11] There seems to be no written evidence to associate *The Masters Song* (figure 5) with the degree of a Master, or its ceremonies. Its length and its several toasts, make clear its suitability for use during the 'formalconvivial' meal of the lodge. Such formal 'refreshment' formed a distinctive part of the lodge, as will be shown.

The anonymous author of *Hiram* (1766) is sure that *The Entered Apprentices Song* and the *Fellow Crafts Song* provided closure to each of the 'Lectures' of the same name. Thus, at the end of the Entered Apprentices lecture, *The Entered Apprentices Song* was sung, after which,

> it is necessary the Brethren should have a little Respite; and, perhaps it is Nine o'Clock in the Evening, when some of the members chuse to have a bit for the Tooth. Those who have ordered any Thing for Supper retire into another Room […] Calling the men from Work to Refreshment.[12]

Likewise, according to the same book, the Fellow Crafts lecture "is always closed with the Fellow Crafts Song […] and at this Time it is perhaps between Ten and Eleven at Night".[13] The obvious point here is that, in practice, the two lectures followed each other, separated by time for a meal. It was at the 'formalconvivial' meal that a song like *The Masters Song* was performed, 'with the Master's leave', with the chorus and a pre-determined toast printed at the end of each of its five sections. At the end of the evening, after the closure of the lodge, a repertoire of commonly popular songs might be performed.

> [Then] all the officers and Brethren take the Jewels from off their necks, and each Member may go or stay as he thinks proper; nothing of Masonry must be mentioned during the remainder of the Night , and it sometimes happens, that after the Lodge is closed, some Member, being warmed with the Juice of the Grape, thinks he may dispense with the Laws of Decency, and indulge himself with an obscene Song; but though it is a Maxim pretty generally received that good Singers should be free from all restriction, yet the best sort of Free Masons

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[11] In neither the first (1723) nor the second (1738) editions of Anderson's book do the rubrics and the songs tally satisfactorily, either with each other, or the evidence of contemporary writers. In cases of conflict I have taken the authority of the contemporary writers, who seem to agree on so much to do with practice.

[12] *Hiram* (1766), p. 31

[13] *Hiram* (1766), p. 36

> have not adopted it, though they do not exclude gay and joyous songs after the Lodge is shut".[14]

Undoubtedly there were some nights when the rehearsal of either (or both) of the 'Lectures' did not go smoothly since each 'Lecture' is rather long and full of details that have to be remembered. This fact might explain why, in 1759, the author of *The Secrets of the Free Masons* wrote:

> I come next to the Songs, which are in great esteem among the Masons, and sung each Night of their meeting, in every Lodge, unless their Building take up so much Time as not to admit of a Song.[15]

The best source of information about eighteenth-century English lodge music and the performance of songs, comes from a series of texts that were published in London within the space of a few years of each other around the 1760s, and nowadays referred to collectively as 'masonic exposures'. The books themselves, far from being designed to undermine freemasonry as their genre title 'exposure' might suggest, are thought to have been published as 'unofficial printed rituals',[16] a way in which freemasonry could ensure a consistency of ritual and organisation amongst the increasingly far-flung English lodges. Interestingly, whatever philosophical and ritual differences there might have been between the two divergent groups of freemasons that were in existence from the 1750s onwards (i.e. the 'Antients' and the so-called 'Moderns'), the existing evidence from printed song material reveals a considerable degree of uniformity between them in their shared song repertoire. It seems reasonable to conclude that their musical performance practice was, until their union in 1813, similar if not identical.

The type of detailed masonic information to be found in the 'masonic exposures' could not have been issued officially since the oath of a freemason obliged those who took it to conceal masonic secrets from the uninitiated. Publicly at least, these books were treated with false contempt by freemasons, but were nonetheless allowed to serve their purpose. That the contempt was false is exemplified by the production, in 1759, of *The Secrets of the Freemasons*, printed in London by J. Scott who was a respected printer of mainstream 'non-secret' masonic literature. He issued several of the later editions of the hugely popular *Pocket Companion for Freemasons*, and does not seem to have drawn down the ire of the brethren upon himself, or his business, as a consequence.

The specific editions of 'masonic exposures' that are useful to a discussion of masonic musical performance practice are *The Secrets of the Freemasons* (1759), *A Master-key to Freemasonry* (1760), *Three Distinct Knocks* (1760), *Jachin and Boaz* (1762),[17] and *Hiram* (1766). Each of these 'exposures' gives slightly differing glimpses of the way masonic lodges

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[14] *Hiram* (1766), p. 36

[15] *The Secrets of the Free Masons Revealed*. second ed. (London: J. Scott, 1759).

[16] R. A. Gilbert and J. Hamill, *Freemasonry: a celebration of the craft* (London: Mackenzie, 1992), p. 28.

[17] *Three Distinct Knocks*, and *Jachin and Boaz* are printed in full in Jackson (1986).

made use of song, but when they are read in conjunction with each other and with the song material itself, it becomes easier to gain a more coherent impression of how some things probably worked.

All the musical information in these sources focuses on *The Entered Apprentices Song* and *The Fellow Crafts Song*. The reason for the sources' focus on these two songs as the distinct musical features of a lodge seems clear from their fundamental 'formalritual' association with the 'Lectures' (as shown above). These two songs' musical success, judging by their continuous appearance in collections of English masonic song texts (occasionally with their music) and in some general, non-masonic song books of the time, was due in no small measure to the simplicity and tunefulness of their melodies. Both these 'official' song texts were straightforward to sing, requiring no more musical resources than just the voices of those present. *The Fellow Crafts Song*, whose music was absent in Anderson's original book, seems to have been popularly supplied, by John Frederick Lampe (17031751).[18] Further evidence to support the fact that these two songs really were connected, as a pair, is borne out by the fact that as early as 1725, the two texts appear side by side on broadsheets sold publicly beyond the lodge.[19]

In *Three Distinct Knocks* it appears that *The Entered Apprentices Song* and *The Fellow Crafts Song*, were accompanied by their own stylised actions.

> When they sing [the Entered Apprentices Song] they all stand around a great Table and join Hands across, that is, your Right-hand takes hold of your Left-hand Man's Left-hand, and your Left-hand Man, with his Right-hand, takes hold of his left Man's Left-hand and so crossing all round. But when they say the last Verse, they jump up all together, ready to shake the Floor down. I myself have been below where there has been a Lodge, and have heard the people say 'Lord Damn their Bloods, what are they doing? They will shake the place down. I'll stay here no longer'. This they call driving of Piles.[20]

Hiram bears out this description:

> [When} the Enter'd Apprentice's Song […] is sung, all the Brethren standing up; and at the End of each verse, they join hands crossways, so as to form a Link or Chain, and shake their Hands up and down, and stamp their Feet hard upon the

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[18] John Frederick Lampe and Benjamin Cole, *British Melody* (London: Benjamin Cole, 1739). Benjamin Cole was a masonic publisher, and Lampe was a freemason. The date of 1739 gives no indication of the date of the music's composition. For a discussion of the original music of this song see Andrew Pink 'Lewis Mercy (fl.1708-51)' in C. Revauger and C. Porset (eds.) *Le Monde maçonnique des Lumières (Europe-Amériques) Dictionnaire prosopographique* (Editions Champion: Paris, 2013), pp. 1944–48.

[19] For example, see British Library, shelfmark C.121.g.8.(9.) (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1725).

[20] Jackson (1986), see p. 83.

> Floor, keeping the Time; and this is what surpises Strangers who may be in a room underneath, or near the Lodge/ It is termed by Masons,, Driving the Piles.[21]

For *The Fellow Crafts Song*, the hands are used to clap rather than forming a chain.

> […] holding your Left hand up keeping it square, then clap with your Right-hand, and Left together, and from thence strike your Left Breast with your Right-hand, the strike your Apron, and your Right Foot going at the same time. This is done altogether as one clap or should be, which makes a great Shaking on the Floor, and what they call driving of Piles to amuse the World. […] I have known some Lodges that have Shores set below to support the Floor, while they have been at work as they call it.[22]

It is not only with the singing of 'formalritual' songs at the end of each 'Lecture' that actions are associated. Highly stylised actions are also part of the performance of 'formalconvivial' songs too (i.e. the songs sung during the lodge meal), at the point when a toast is made after a song. It is the association of the text of a toast with a song that determines such songs as having a 'formalconvivial' use.

In Anderson's original (1723) text of *The Masters Song* which is very long, there is a break provided, for a formal toast at the end of each of its five sections.[23] The Antient lodges' several editions of constitutions (*Ahimon Rezon*), from 1756, appropriated Anderson's songs as the basis of an expanded repertoire of mostly 'formal-convivial' (i.e toasting) songs, and this expanded 'Antients' repertoire is the found – in return - appropriated by subsequent editions of Anderson's book (1756, 1784). The same toasts that appear in both books were listed in the 'masonic exposure' *Tubal Kain* (1759).

Toasts Used by Masons

To the King and the Craft, as Master Masons
To all Kings, Princes and Potentates, that ever propagated the Royal Art
To his imperial Majesty (our Brother) Francis Emperor of Germany
To all the Fraternity around the Globe
To the Right Worshipful and Grand Master
To all the Noble Lords and Right Worshipful Brethren that have been Grand Masters.
To all well disposed, charitable Masons
To the Worshipful Grand Wardens
To the perpetual honour of Free-Masons
To the Masters and Wardens of all Regular Lodges
To all true and faithful Brethren &c

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[21] *Hiram*, p. 31.

[22] Jackson (1986), see p.92.

[23] From the second (1738) edition of Anderson;s book (and in subsequent editions), *The Master's Song* was shortened, to one section with a toast. The toasts belonging to the omitted sections of the song were attached to a series of new songs in the editions from 1738 onwards.

To all the Brethren sons of the antient and honourable Craft
To the memory of him who first planted a Vine
To Masons and to Masons bairns
And Women with both wit and Charms
That love to lie in Masons Arms
To all the female friends of Masonry[24]

All of this appears to be borne out in the text of a song published in Devon in 1763, entitled

Five Masonic Songs By a BROTHER of a Lodge at Plymouth. Published at the Request of Several of The BROTHERS

And after we've our Business done
Then we rejoice and sing;
To our Grand Master take a Glass,
And George the Third our King.
An to the Lodge we'll go &c

Then if the Master will permit,
Dear Brethren join with me;
To all Free Masons drink a Health,
And give them three times three.
And to the Lodge we'll go &c [25]

The author of *Jachin and Boaz* goes into some detail about how the drinking of these 'formalconvivial' toasts were stylised,

> The table being plentifully stored with Wine and Punch &c every Man has a Glass set before him, and fills it with what he chuses, and as often as he pleases. But he must drink his glass in turn or at least keep the Motion with the rest. When therefore a Public Health is given the Master fills first, and desires the Brethren to charge their Glasses, and when this is supposed to be done the Master says *Brethren are you all charged?* The Senior and Junior Warden answer *We are all charged in the South and West*. Then they all stand up, and observing the Masters Motion (like the Soldier his Right Hand Man) drink their Glasses off, and if the Master proposes the toast with *three times three Claps* they throw the Glasses with the Right Hand at Full Length, bringing them across their Throats <u>three</u> Times, and making three Motions to put them down on the table, at the third they are set down (though [they are] perhaps fifty in number) as if it was but one, then raising their hands Breast high, they clap nine Times against the Right, divided

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[24] Pritchard (1759), p. 24.

[25] *Five Masonic Songs by a Brother of a Lodge at Plymouth* (Exeter: W. Andrews and R. Trewman, 1763).

> into three Divisions, which they term *Drinking with three times three*: and at the end they give Huzzah.

Although the 1738 edition of Andersons *Constitutions* provides a toast after *The Fellow Crafts Song*, there is no evidence that a toast was part of the performance of the song in its 'formalritual' use. Thus the 1738 *Constitutions*, and subsequent volumes implies that 'formalritual' songs could, at times, serve as 'formalconvivial songs too.

Here then is evidence of the establishment not only of a 'formalritual' song tradition, but also of a 'formal-convivial' song tradition. By the 1760s, at least, drinking a health and singing were firmly associated one with the other and taking place during the 'formalconvivial' meal that came at the mid-point of the evening, under the supervision of the lodge's Master. A certain song required a certain toast; a certain toast required a certain song. This was a practical way of establishing formality during the conviviality of the meal time and of moderating the drinking; an important consideration, given that the Fellow Crafts lecture was very often likely to follow the meal. It seems unlikely that every toast was used every time a lodge met; the number of songs, and thus of toasts, varying according to circumstance.

This all adds up to a lively, busy, noisy, entertaining and distinctly musical, but very controlled, evening. The singing of the songs at the end of each 'Lecture' was accompanied by rhythmic stamping and the holding of hands in chains, while the meal time was accompanied by singing, and loud, stylised toasting, shouting, clapping and stamping. Even the distinctly proper 'work' of the lodge, as described in *The Secrets of the Freemasons* was often marked with loud cheering:

> The Applause that each Brother meets with from the whole Society, upon his duly and proportionately finishing a Piece in Architecture, is always expressed by loud Acclamations, [and] generally alarms, and surpizes [sic] those who are sitting by and under the Room where the Lodge is held.[26]

Although freemasonry was practiced in secret, it seems that it was hardly discrete, and so it comes as no surprise that on 18 April 1737 a correspondent to *The Craftsman* newspaper wrote of the freemasons that

> these Men are generally look'd upon, in England, as a Parcel of like People, who meet together only to make merry, and play some ridiculous pranks',

and an irritable parody of *The Entered Apprentices Song* appeared in the London press as early as 1725, and feeling confident of popular comprehension in it's appeal:

> Good People give ear,
> And the truth shall appear,
> For we scorn to put any grimace on:
> We've been lamm'd long enough,
> With this damn'd silly stuff,

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[26] *The Secrets of the Free Masons*, see p. 20.

Of a Free and an Accepted Mason.[27]

This contemporary cartoon (figure 2) plays to the contemporary impression of boisterousness associated with early eighteenth-century English freemasonry.

Figure 2: Mid eighteenth-century masonic lodge room.
Satirical engraving *The Free-Mason's Surprized* (London: T. Wilkins, 1754).

[27] The text of the parody appeared in *The London Journal* of 10 July 1725.

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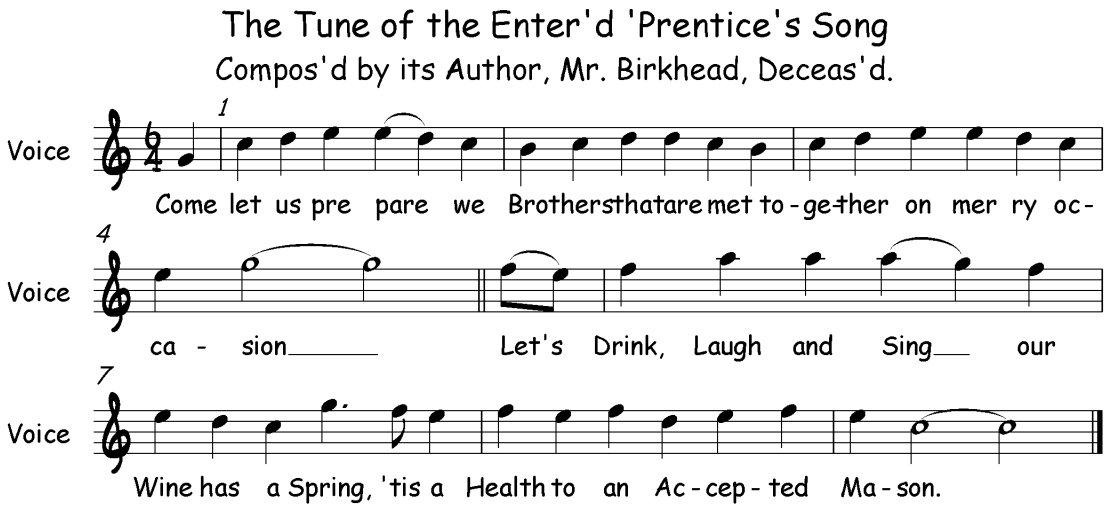
The Tune of the Enter'd 'Prentice's Song
Compos'd by its Author, Mr. Birkhead, Deceas'd.
Voice
1
Come let us pre pare we Brothersthatare met to-ge-ther on mer ry oc-
Voice
4
ca - sion Let's Drink, Laugh and Sing our
Voice
7
Wine has a Spring, 'tis a Health to an Ac-cep-ted Ma-son.

Figure 3. 'The Entered Apprentices Song' from Anderson's *Constitutions*, (1723).

The Fellow Crafts Song
[First verse]
[J.F.Lampe 1702/3-1751]
Hail Ma - son-ry thou_ Craft di-vine Glo-ry of Earth from Heav'n re -
veal'd Which doth with je- wels_ pre-cious shine From all but Ma-sons
Eyes con - ceal'd Thy_ Prai-ses due who_ can_ re-hearse In
nar - row Prose or_ flow - ing Verse Thy Prai-ses due who_ can_ re-hearse In
nar-row Prose or_ flow - wing_ Verse. Thy_ Verse.
1.
2.

Figure 4: 'The Fellow Crafts Song' by J. F. Lampe in *British Melody* (1739).

The Master's Song
[Verse 5: Thus Mighty Eastern Kings]
Anderson's Constitutions, 1723
Thus migh-ty East - ern Kings, and Sons Of A-bram's Race, and
Mon-archs good, Of E - gypt, Sy - ria, Greece and
Rome, TrueArch-i - tec ture un-der - stood. No won-der
then if Ma - son join To ce - le-brate those Ma-son Kings,
With so - lemn Note and flow - ing Wine, Whilst
ev 'ry Bro - ther joint - ly sings.

2 32
[CHORUS at the end of each section]
[Voice 1]
Whocanun-fold the Roy-al Art? or sing its Secrets in a
[Voice 2
Whocanun- fold - the Roy-al - Art? or sing - itsSe-crets in a
[Continio
39
Song? They're safe - ly kept in Ma - son's
Song? They're safe - ly kept in Ma - son's
43
Heart, And to - the - an - cient Lodge be - long.
Heart, - And to - the an - cient Lodge be - long.

Figure 5: ‘The Masters Song’, from Anderson’s *Constitutions* (1723).

Biographical note.

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